W.D. Albright

SHERIDAN LAWRENCE

Henry Lawrence's family had comprised nine children, viz. Sheridan, James, Grace, Minnie, Harry, Arthur, Isaac, John and Wilson; Wilson being the only one born at Fort Vermilion.

Sheridan, the eldest son, married the daughter of Rev. Archdeacon Scott, whose son, Osborne Scott, has been prominently identified with the Passenger Department of the C.N.R. James Lawrence married (at Fort Vermilion) Florence Lendren, daughter of a surveyor from Vankleek Hill, Ont. After her death in Edmonton Jim married Miss Fannie Minshaw, sister of an Anglican missionary at Peace River, who was for years secretary to Bishop Robins.

Harry Lawrence went to the Klondike under a nine-page contract with Frank B. Wilson, Hudson's Bay Co. contractor at Fort Vermilion. Harry made a fast trip. Going down the Hay river after the ice went out he burned his boats at Alexandra Falls in order to recover the nails. Whipsawing lumber below the falls he rebuilt and following the ice along the south shore of Great Slave Lake proceeded down the Mackenzie, crossing to the Yukon by the Rat River portage and reaching the Klondike three weeks or so ahead of those who had waited for the Slave River to open.

Soon after returning from the Klondike Harry married Maud Lendrum eldest sister of his brother Jim's first wife, and now lives at Buffalo Lake in the Grande Prairie district. Arthur died there a few years ago. Miss Minnie Lawrence married a man named Holden.

Shortly before James Lawrence married Miss Florence Lendrum, her sister had married Capt. A.L. (Fred) Brick, who was in Edmonton with a shipment of furs, being at that time trading with his elder brother, Allie, who had previously married Miss Nancy Whitebear.

The first Fort Vermilion was down near the Red River and the pickets of the fence were painted with red clay. Then halfway up to the present Fort Vermilion there was built another little fort today called the Old Fort. Ruins of its chimney can be seen among the trees.

The Tall Cree Prairie was named after a fine-looking old Cree about six feet tall who had three wives and kept three teepees, having about eleven children in all. The family are now about all gone except two, succumbing to scrofula and tuberculosis. A French half-breed from St. Albert married one of the daughters but would not work or be constant. The tall Cree gave him a good talking to and advised him to get work at the Post. The half-breed instead went in and shot himself.

Frank B. Wilson, the well-known H.B. Co. post manager at Fort Vermilion, went there about 1888, having previously been assistant in Edmonton. He was at the Fort until about 15 (now 18?) years ago, when he was sent to James Bay after which he was retired (or returned) to Edmonton.

He was succeeded at Fort Vermilion by A.P. (Gus)Clarke, who continued until retired in 1931, when he was followed by the present manager, Mr. Henry. It has been said of "Gus" Clarke that he would give a man the shirt off his back then turn around and steal it for the company."

SHERIDAN LAWRENCE

INTERVIEW WITH SHERIDAN LAWRENCE

(On M.B. "Weenusk" en route Fort Vermilion to Peace River, June, 1932.)

Mr. Sheridan Lawrence was accompanying a shipment of 20 head of cattle of eleven or twelve hundredweight apiece which had been fed slough hay with some chop from February on. They were being carried on a barge to steel at Peace River for a flat boat-rate of $4.00 a head. Rail freight to Edmonton would probably amount to another $4.00. Hogs are carried at $1.00 per head on the boat; wheat at $5.00 per ton or 15 cents a bushel. The cattle rate remained the same as in 1916 when Mr. Lawrence shipped out seven carloads of wheat grading No. 2, with one percent dockage.

The Lawrence family had in 1932 about 800 acres of patented land and a claim on another 1200. At the home place there were about thirty buildings on a site including the spot where his father, the late Henry Lawrence, first located in the summer of 1887, a bunkhouse standing on the spot where he put his first shed (or shack?). In that year Henry Lawrence had some of his garden on the side hill and six acres of barley on the flat. He had also put in some of his brother's crop, E.J. Lawrence, on the flat across the river. Henry Lawrence's first breaking had been cropped continuously since 1887 except for an occasional summerfallow.

The lowest wheat yield the Lawrence's had ever had was 16 bushels per acre; the highest for the whole farm being 37 bushels. They like Ruby and have had good results with Marquis but were now growing Garnet, while one of Sheridan's sons, Malcolm, was starting with Reward. In 1932 they had nearly 200 acres of wheat, mostly on fallow. To fight stinkweed they had disked their 1931 fallow in the autumn of 1930, ploughed it in 1931 when the weed was in bloom, spring-toothed it twice and harrowed several times, then harrowed twice in the spring of 1932 before seeding and again after it was up several inches, a lever harrow being employed. The crop in June was comparatively clean though the weed still showed along the fence bottoms.

The 1932 crop acreage in the Fort Vermilion district may be twenty thousand acres or less. Three years earlier it was thirty thousand. Half the present acreage might have been wheat, the balance oats or barley. In 1931, said Mr. Lawrence, the wheat mostly graded 2° and 3°.

The price of Mr. Lawrence's brand of flour "Flavo" in 1932 was $3.00 sacked in thousand-pound lots, wholesale; retail price $4.00. The flour yield from average wheat was 29 to 33 pounds per bushel of No. 1, the No. 2 running through with the shorts to make dog feed. Patent flour had been $6.50 until the past winter when it was reduced by the H.B. Co. to $4.20 and $4.15 cash.

In the year of the Prairie Point fire, he added, we lost fifteen thousand bushels of wheat. In 1916 we brought in a Midget Mill and from 1916 to 1930 averaged about 90,000 pounds of flour a year with never less than 40,000. In 1930-3. we made 218,750 pounds of fine flour and the next year, 208,000 pounds.

From 65 hogs we cured last year about 7,000 pounds of bacon and about the same this year, besides disposing of all the fresh pork. There is very little sale for beef in the rabbit years. This past couple of years moose have been plentiful.

Cured bacon is now (1932) selling at about 25 cents a pound; outside bacon being thirty. Local eggs are not lower than 20 sents, but outside eggs are now coming in at half of the local price. Butter is 85 cents. In the winter we take butter at 40 cents and eggs at 30 to 40 cents.

The fur catch of 1931-32 was fairly good, beaver helping out greatly. Possibly between two and three thousand were caught in the Fort Vermilion, Hay River and surrounding country, worth an average of perhaps $9.00 apiece. Then there may have been 25,000 muskrats taken.

Forty or forty-five buffalo have been seen around the Fort, though the nearest point of the reserve is 84 miles or so distant.

Herald Tribune, June 20/40.

LAWRENCE CLAN GATHERS IN FORCE AT PEACE RIVER
FOR BIG FAMILY REUNION

In the year 1886 Mr. and Mrs. H.H. Lawrence and family moved from eastern Canada to Fort Vermilion, Alberta. (He was sent out by Bishop Bompas, as agricultural expert to the mission.) They went as far as Calgary by rail, thence overland by wagons to Peace River Landing, and then by rafts to Fort Vermilion. There were eight children with them, and a ninth was born in their new home--seven boys and two girls. The eldest of the family was a son, Sheridan, who has lived there up until recently and now lives in Peace River, spending some of the time at High Prairie, where he has established a flour mill.

Sheridan was born in April, 1870, and would be around 16 when he arrived out West. In 1890 he married a daughter of Archdeacon Scott and from this union there were 15 children. They had their own school in Vermilion, having more than enough pupils to get the government school grant, all drawn from the one family.

On Sunday, June 9, there was a gathering of the Lawrence clan at Peace River, for a family reunion, to which all children were present, besides three brothers. They all attended church service in the morning, then held a banquet for the immediate family, and in the afternoon a picnic was held at James Lawrence's place near the town, to which over sixty were present, all being related by

either blood or marriage. On Monday they all motored over to Grande Prairie, and on Tuesday went to the Beaverlodge Experimental Substation, where they all signed their names on the register.

The following of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence's children were present: Hester of High Prairie; Malcolm of Notikewin; Margaret, Peace River; Osborne, Peace River; Edith, Erskine; Velma, Berwyn; Alice, Edmonton; Daisy and Stanley, Fort Vermilion; Ganet, Grande Prairie; Isaac and Oswald of High Prairie; Elmer and Walter of Peace River. The three brothers, James and Will of Peace River and Harry of Sexsmith, Jack who lives in Inland, Alberta, was unable to be present. Besides the above there were innumerable son-in-laws, daughter-in-laws, and grandchildren.